

Review The Fall of Granada

De Volkskrant

Subtle underlying message in Hotel Modern's *The Fall of Granada*

Civilisations rise and fall, and so does barbarism – this is the central message of the intensely visual historical stage production *The Fall of Granada* by Hotel Modern and Abdelkader Benali.

Hotel Modern made their name by recreating entire miniature worlds on stage, using models, figurines and everyday objects. The group used this method for both *Kamp* (with its scale model of Auschwitz) and the less weighty *Shrimp Tales*. For *The Fall of Granada* they have turned to using shadow-play techniques to bring to life the medieval world of Granada, with the Alhambra at its centre, standing as a symbol of the flourishing prosperity, learning and culture of its time. Jews, Muslims and Christians lived there together in harmony. But in 1492, it all came to an end when the Catholics, through the unspeakable brutality of the Spanish Inquisition, expelled Muslims and Jews. The parallels with today are obvious, though never explicitly stated.

While Pauline Kalker, Arlène Hoornweg and Herman Helle create the shadow images and perform small acting roles, Benali tells stories from that era: stories of enlightened kings and Islamic artists; and stories of scientists who were ahead of their time, developing innovations such as irrigation and the mathematical concept of zero. Although this combination usually works well, the shadow play is sometimes reduced to an illustration accompanying its story. One particularly powerful scene shows the destruction wrought by the Spanish Inquisition, with depictions of the execution pyres, book burnings and murders. These moments hit unexpectedly hard, especially when one realises there has never been a period when such things did not happen.

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